

Report Bandelier National Monument

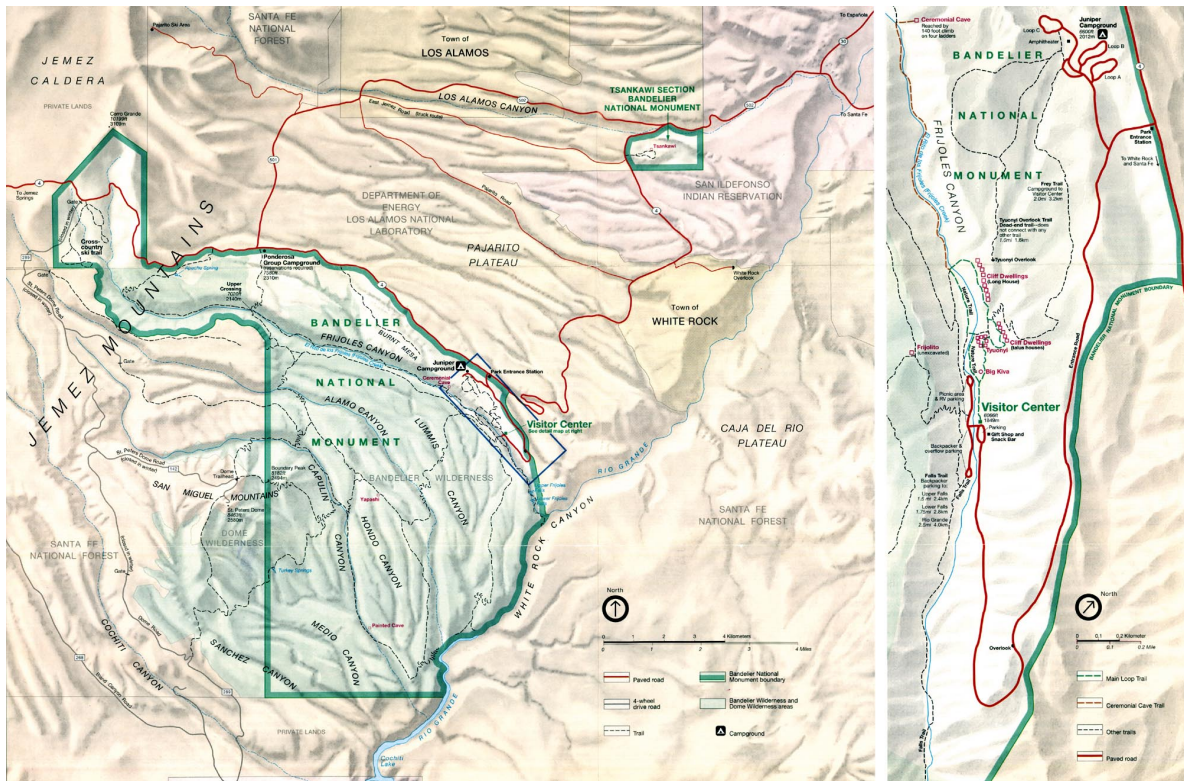
■ 1.0 Site Description

Bandelier National Monument was named in honor of Adolph F.A. Bandelier, a self-taught anthropologist-historian, who extensively studied the ancient ruins of the Pueblo Civilization across the American Southwest and Mexico. Through the efforts of archaeologist Edgar L. Hewett, the Bandelier site was designated as a national monument in 1916.

Bandelier New Mexico is located 48 miles northwest of Santa Fe, New Mexico, near the towns of White Rock (7 miles) and Los Alamos (20 miles) (see Figure 1). From U.S. 285, the monument's Visitor Center is reached by way of New Mexico State Highway 502 and 4, a distance of 20 miles. A number of backcountry entrances to the park can also be accessed by SH 4. The site is divided into a large main body and a physically separated smaller piece of land known as the Tsankawi Section 15 miles to the northeast. The total size of the monument is 32,737 acres, with 70 percent designated as backcountry wilderness. Most of the monument is accessible only on foot. The only roads located within the monument boundaries include the short road (2.5 miles) from the entrance station at the top of Pajarito Plateau to the Visitor Center on the valley floor of Frijoles Canyon, and a section of SH 4 in a remote northwestern section of the monument.

The main attractions at Bandelier National Monument are cliff dwellings, which may be found in many areas of the monument. The greatest concentrations of cliff dwellings are located along a 1.4-mile loop trail, which begins at the Visitor Center. A ceremonial cave accessed by a series of four wooden ladders is located one-half mile beyond the loop trail. Another popular hiking trail is the Falls Trail, which lead to the Upper and Lower Frijoles River Waterfalls. There is a semi-primitive, 1.5-mile loop trail at the Tsankawi Site, which features a large, unexcavated ruin, cliff dwellings, and petroglyphs (prehistoric picture drawings on rock). Other areas of the monument are accessed by 70 miles of trails. Prehistoric dwellings and petroglyphs may be found in these areas as well. These remote trails and areas are rugged, featuring steep canyons, and are more suited to full-day hikes and backpacking.

The monument is open to the public throughout the entire year. The Visitor Center operates from 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. in the spring and fall, and 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. during the winter months. Hours are extended for the summer. Visitation is highest in late spring and summer with July being the peak month, and on weekends and holidays. During these months visitors may be delayed in parking their vehicles for 20 minutes to two hours. The average length of stay is two to three hours. Annual visitation totals for the last three years have exceeded 350,000. The main body of the park experiences much higher visitation than the Tsankwai Site.

Figure 1. Bandelier National Monument Site Map

■ 2.0 Existing ATS

No Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) services currently exist in terms of access to the monument location. All of the archaeological sites are accessible on foot. Approximately one-half of the site is handicapped accessible.

■ 3.0 ATS Needs

A 2.5-mile shuttle route system between the entrance station and the Visitor Center to help alleviate parking, traffic, and safety problems, has been identified as a potential ATS need for the monument. The length of a possible shuttle route between the main monument site and the smaller Tsankawi Section is considered too distant to be feasible for the relatively low demand.

■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

Because parking areas at the Visitor Center on the valley floor are limited due to the steep and narrow canyon walls, visitors to the monument often experience delays of up to two hours to enter the monument. A shuttle bus system could entice visitors to leave their cars behind at parking facilities located at the entrance station. This could increase the annual number of visitors to the site. However, a Visitor Experience Resource Protection Study (VERP) must be conducted prior to looking at ATS modes of access to the monument. This study would determine whether the monument could accommodate additional visitors without degrading the quality of the visitor experience, or the archaeological resources themselves.

■ 5.0 Bibliography

Bandelier National Monument. "Bandelier." Map/brochure. GPO: 1998-432-903/60371.

Bandelier National Monument. Internet Site: <http://www.nps.gov/band>. Information printed November 24, 1999.

■ 6.0 Persons Interviewed

Roy Weaver, Superintendent. Telephone Interview. November 1999